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SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: 2008 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

REF: A) STATE 120019 B) ANTANANARIVO 701

SUMMARY

1. International terrorism remained a concern in Madagascar in 2008 due to the island nation's inadequately monitored 3,000 mile coastline. Despite limited resources, government officials were eager to cooperate with the United States and the international community to implement counterterrorism measures. The Government of Madagascar took a number of steps, detailed below, to improve border security and combat terrorist finance in 2008. End summary.

2. International terrorism was a concern in Madagascar because of the island nation's inadequately monitored 3,000 mile coastline. Limited equipment, personnel, and training for border control increased the risks of penetration. Malagasy police, military, intelligence, and security forces have not had much training in counterterrorism and maritime surveillance. Although Madagascar has not been the victim of a major terrorist attack to date, the country is particularly concerned about its ability to provide security and ensure against terrorist attacks when it hosts the African Union Summit in July 2009.

3. Despite limited resources, government officials were willing to cooperate with the United States and the international community. Madagascar volunteered to be chosen by the UN as a pilot country for counterterrorism efforts, and received a UN evaluation mission headed by UN C/T Chief Mike Smith in October. The UN team will draft a report of recommendations for the GOM on how to better implement UN Resolution 1373, likely focusing on improved coordination between the intelligence services, police, and gendarmerie (ref B).

4. To combat terrorist threats, the GOM has created the Central Counterterrorism Service within the Ministry of Interior to work with INTERPOL and provide information within the framework of regional and international cooperation. It has also created a special counterterrorism branch within the Central Intelligence Service. In June, the Financial Intelligence Unit (SAMIFIN) was officially launched. It is charged with combating money laundering, including terrorist finance.

5. The GOM also took steps in 2008 to create a coast guard to improve maritime security and border control, although much work remains to be done. The government improved customs methods and equipment and adopted a biometric passport. It also installed an information system to track arrivals and departures, x-ray machines, UV lamps, and magnetometers at the international airports. The administration drafted a bill encompassing the universal counterterrorism instruments, including the requirements of UN resolution 1373, to be presented to parliament in 2009. Judges, prosecutors, and judicial police were trained on international counterterrorism cooperation in January.

6. Despite this progress, limited resources constrained Madagascar's ability to confront a potential terrorist threat. The Malagasy authorities still lack the capacity to effectively monitor suspect organizations, control suspicious financial transactions, control the movement of people and goods across its borders, and identify terrorist suspects.

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STROMAYER